DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 033 IR 015 770

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TITLE A Survey of Student Teachers' Library Media Skills: A Replication.
PUB DATE Feb 92
NOTE 8p.; In: Proceedings of Selected Research and Development Presentations at the Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology and Sponsored by the Research and Theory Division; see IR 015 706.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Learning Resources Centers; Library Services; *Library Skills; Media Specialists; Preservice Teacher Education; School Libraries; State Surveys; Student Attitudes; *Student Teachers; Users (Information)
IDENTIFIERS *Arkansas; Student Surveys

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the current status of student teachers' library media skills. The primary objective of the study was to replicate a 1966 survey by the Knapp Foundation Project that examined student teachers' knowledge of library resources and services. Other objectives were to expand the population studied to include all teacher education institutions in Arkansas and to create a database of responses for subsequent studies, which will include administration of the questionnaire to a geographically dispersed population. Subjects were student teachers who began their field experience in the spring of 1991 in Arkansas. A total of 444 students from 5 major schools of education responded to the survey. Data were gathered on background information, including major field of study, library/media skills instruction, perceptions of effectiveness of library use; bibliographic skills, including knowledge of the card catalog and journal indexes; mediagraphic skills, including knowledge of audiovisual equipment, copyright laws, and resources for locating media and software; bibliographic/electronic sources, including knowledge of electronic reference sources and databases; and perceptions of the library and librarian, including expectations of services, materials, and competencies. Overall, students seemed to have a good general sense of both information genre and electronic bibliographic resources, but responses to mediagraphic skill questions varied widely. (11 references) (MES)

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Title:

A Survey of Student Teachers' Library Media Skills: A Replication

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A SURVEY OF STUDENT TEACHERS' LIBRARY MEDIA SKILLS: A REPLICATION

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. An extension of this definition for the information age is "the ability to locate, retrieve, select, organize, evaluate and communicate information. Cast in a slightly different fashion, . . . the ability to access, assimilate, and transfer information" (Thurman, 1987). It is assumed that the hallmark of an educated person is the ability to access information on any topic, in a field of interest or profession, assimilate the material, and communicate the resulting information. This assumption is made, not only for all students who achieve a baccalaureate, but particularly for those who propose to enter the field of teaching. It will be their task to maintain and improve the literacy of our children.

The ability to access information by student teachers is the basis for this study. For if teachers are to teach students to access information, they must possess the bibliographic/mediagraphic skills first. Although this study is addressing an issue of the information age, it emerged in the literature nearly thirty years ago.

In 1964, when school libraries were beginning the transformation into library media centers, Witt made the following observations about the proficiency of teachers' library skills:

> "No one is more influential than the teacher in shaping the curriculum and in determining the nature and extent of a learner's achievements. Consequently, if we are to have teachers who believe it important to use many different types of materials for teaching and learning and who know how to use these materials appropriately and effectively, steps must be taken to make certain that teachers develop the values, knowledges and skills essential to this sort of professional behavior." (p. 37)

During the mid-sixties a five-year collaboration between selected teacher education institutions and public schools was funded by the Knapp Foundation to provide the training described by Witt (Sullivan, 1967, pp. 13-15). A result of the project was the construction of "a 13-item questionnaire to test teachers' knowledge of the availability and use of library resources and services" (Walker, 1967, p. 17). "Eleven of the 13 items on the questionnaire were factual items. The other two asked the student teachers to name ways the library and librarians could be of service to them in their teaching" (Walker, 1967, p. 23). The questionnaire was given to 85 student teachers. The resultant data suggested two trends: 1. that student teachers use a small number of references or sources of information; and 2. they have a merger concept of how the library and the librarian can help them in their teaching (Walker, 1966, p. 66).

In the final report of the project, the editor stated that there were several implications for teacher education: 1) that unless teachers understood the library's function and utilize its resources, they could not provide information for each child on his own level of learning, and cultural background; and 2) that the teacher training institution has a responsibility to prepare teachers who understand this role of the library and who will make use of all its resources (Sullivan, 1968, p. 121).

In College and Research Library News, an American Library Association (ALA) committee issued a similar statement that "Students in education need an increasingly sophisticated knowledge of library resources in order to access information in the discipline" (1981, p. 209). The Bibliographic Competencies for Education Students Committee developed an instrument to evaluate competencies primarily in the professional instruction of teachers, e.g., reference materials accessed by teachers-in-training, rather than teachers-in-service. The focus of the

thirteen item instrument was the skills needed as an undergraduate or a graduate student in education, rather than the knowledge base needed by a practicing teacher. There has been no reported use of this ALA instrument in the literature.

Six years later a tangential study in Ohio surveyed "elementary-education faculty at teacher-training institutions in Ohio . . . to explore attitudes toward the elementary school teacher's role in research skills instruction and toward library instruction in teacher-training programs . . . , [since] elementary schoolteachers play an important part in the development of both bibliographic skills and the critical-thinking skills that are necessary to complete research tasks successfully" (O'Hanlon, 1987, p. 17). The survey results supported the teaching of library skills to future teachers.

A search of Tests in Print III to locate measurement instruments for determining library media skills of student teachers yielded relatively dismal results. Three tests were located, one for grades 7 through college, one a high school through college "Test on Use of the Dictionary," and a set of three library tests for college. The information for each indicated either they were old, 1980, 1955-63, 1967-72 respectively; or the in-print status was uncertain (Mitchell, 1983, pp. 214, 425).

In addition to the scattered and negligible research reported in the literature, another force is impending which will call for the kind of research study reported here. Increasingly states are implementing curriculum guides which suggest teachers teach study, reference or research skills, in essence library media skills. As an example, The Arkansas Curriculum Guides include the following basic skills: Location of information using the card catalog, encyclopedia, an index, and a table of contents (Language Arts--Grade 6, p. 10); identification of the four types of cards in the card catalog and location of books by using call numbers (English I--Grade 9, p. 7); and the location of information in a bibliography, using footnotes, using a thesaurus, using the Reader's Guide and Who's Who" (English II--Grade 11, p. 16). To date there has been no measure of accountability included in either teacher education nor teacher practice of the skills.

Therefore, rather than develop an instrument to measure student teachers' library media skills, it seemed prudent to replicate the questionnaire used in the Knapp Foundation's Project. This was used to evaluate the skills student teachers took into the field. The results are compared with those of the original study to determine whether the findings remain stable with the passage of time, or not. Also the results are somewhat indicative of the state of student teachers' library media skills, as well as the instruction received in institutions of higher education.

Thus the primary objective of this study was to replicate the survey of the Knapp Foundation Project, edited and appended to for currency, to assay the current status of student teachers' library media skills. A secondary objective was to expand the population studied to include all teacher education institutions in the state of Arkansas, rather than 85 subjects at experimental sites within three states as was done initially. A tertiary objective was to accumulate a database of responses for subsequent studies which will include the administration of this questionnaire, in closed form, to a selected population that is geographically dispersed.

Methodology

As stated previously, the primary objective of this study was to replicate the survey of the Knapp Foundation Project, to assay the current status of student teachers' library media skills. Data for this study was collected by mailing sets of questionnaires to contact people in identified teacher education sites, administered to students just prior to their field-experience, and returned to the University of Central Arkansas for collation and analysis.

Subjects

The subjects were student teachers who began their field-experience in the spring of 1991 in Arkansas. Of the 19 institutions listed, 5 of the major schools of education participated, with 444 students responding to the survey.

Materials

The survey instrument was a 22-item, open-ended questionnaire. The items had been administered to several graduate educational media/library science research classes over a 2-year span of time to clarify the questions. However, the 13 items of the original questionnaire retained their initial intent, if not form, while other items were added for administrative purposes (3) or provision for technological changes in information acquisition (6).

Procedures

Based upon state department of education lists, each school of education dean within the state was contacted by letter to gain their support, arrange the administration of the questionnaire, and identify a contact person; included was a postcard to return the name of the contact person, the time for administration of the survey, and number of students that would be participating. According to the schedule of administration, sets of questionnaires were mailed to each contact person, with a letter of transmittal and a pre-addressed stamped envelope for return. For any packages of questionnaires which were two weeks late, according to the schedule of return deadlines, the contact persons were telephoned as a reminder.

Analysis

The responses to each question were entered and frequency counts were tallied for each institutional group. Then the resulting top 10 categories for each question from each institution were merged into a final frequency count tally. A conscious effort was made to enter open-ended responses with a minimum of interpretation, to obtain categories for the tally. From the pooled tally, the top categories for each question were ranked. All of the data was pooled, therefore no linking of respondents and responses was attempted, i.e., according to elementary education, secondary education, and fields of specialization respondents, as as done in the original Knapp Foundation study.

Results

To report the results, the questions and responses have been assembled into five content categories: Background information, Bibliographic skills, Mediagraphic skills, Bibliographic/electronic sources, and Perceptions of library and librarian.

Background

The first three questions were posed for background and administrative purposes to determine who the subjects were, what skills they had learned, and where they had learned their skills. Based on the first question, the major field of study in education, the following response pattern emerged: Elementary Education, 245; Secondary Education, 184; and Other/blank, 15.

The next question asked whether the student's college work included instructions in library skills or media skills and in what class? Of those responding, 65% (272, n = 416) reported library instruction, and 90% (368, n = 411) media instruction. Instruction was most frequently encountered in a special media class; then in order, part of another class, orientation sessions, a special library class, and other classes.

The last question dealt with student teachers' perception of whether they had learned to use the library (library media center) effectively in their teaching or

not. Two hundred seven or 48% (n = 428) felt they had learned to use the library effectively in methods classes, other classes, and special library classes.

Bibliographic skills

In the next section of the questionnaire bibliographic skills were addressed. For example, one question asked "You can locate a book through the card catalog by looking up its" what? Students listed author (430), title (421), subject (378), and other (49). Indicative of the pattern of responses for library skills, was the question which stated: "If a student wanted to see if any magazine articles had been written on a topic you have given him/her to explore, what reference works would you suggest?" The top 10 responses, in rank order, were the following: 1. The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, 2. ERIC, 3. periodicals, 4. the card catalog, 5. microfiche, 6. an index of journals, 7. a periodical catalog, 8. a computer, 9. ask a librarian, and 10. microfilm.

Mediagraphic skills

Four questions specifically addressed media skills. First, students were asked what was "the main difference between an opaque projector and an overhead projector." Of the 326 responding, 61% (199) were correct, and 39% (127) were incorrect. Then, the question "to find out what filmstrips are available on a given topic, what reference would you consult?" was asked. The top responses, in rank order, were: 1. the card catalog, 2. ask a librarian, 3. an educational cooperative agency, 4. the state PBS affiliate, 5. a filmstrip catalog, 6. a media guide, 7. a book of filmstrip titles, 8. a library, and 9. a curriculum lab. The third question dealt with listing "constraints imposed on teachers by the 1976 copyright laws (or subsequent revisions of the law)." The responses, in rank order, were: 1. get permission to copy, 2. the number of copies that can be made are limited, 3. the law varies with the type of material copied, 4. copied materials must be used in classrooms, 5. no profit should be made with copies, 6. there is a time limit, 7. materials cannot be copied, 8. purchase--don't copy, and 9. plagerism. The fourth, and last media question was one that was added to reflect newer technology: "what source(s) would you use to find appropriate microcomputer disks to support classroom teaching?" In rank order, the top responses were: 1. catalogs, 2. software guides/catalogs, 3. the library, 4. ask the librarian, 5. ERIC, 6. "Only the Best" magazine, 7. the card catalog, and 8. books.

Bibliographic/electronic sources

Six more questions addressed bibliographic skills, two of which crossed the boundary of media, those of electronic reference sources and electronic databases. The answers to one is indicative of the other, when asked to name an electronic reference source which includes full text, or name electronic databases that serve as indexes to information, the resultant distribution was slightly different but the categories were the same. The query on electronic databases gained the following, in rank order: 1. ERIC/CD-ROM, 2. computer, 3. microfiche, 4. video, 5. microfilm, and 6. Psych. Lit.

Perception of library and librarian

The last two questions, from the original questionnaire, reflect students' perception of the library [library media center] and the librarian [library media specialist]. In response to the question: "How can the library be of service to you in your teaching?", twenty catagories emerged. The top 10 catagories, in rank order were: 1. provide/access media, 2. have research materials for students and teachers, 3. have references, 4. have books/trade books, 5. children/teachers can get books, 6. have topic/content background resources, 7. provide information, 8. have ideas [for bulletin boards, activities, etc.], 9. have media equipment, and 10. have many

resources. To elicit the students' understanding of the librarian, the following question was posed: "As a classroom teacher, what competencies would you expect the school librarian to possess that would enhance and supplement your teaching?" The top replies, in rank order, were: 1. know library and use of its materials, 2. have knowledge of sources, 3. be able to access information, 4. have media experience, 5. be able to help teachers find information, 6. work with and have an interest in students, 7. know what's available, 8. have a willingness to help students, and 9. be able to access information for teachers.

Discussion

The objectives of this study were met, with varying degrees of success. The Knapp Foundation Project survey was edited and appended to for currency, and replicated. The objective to expand the population studied, had mixed results. The number of subjects was expanded to include 444, by far more than the original 85; but the expansion to the 19 teacher education institutions in the state of Arkansas, fell short with 5 participating institutions. Even though the original intent of this study was to survey the state population, the dominant teacher education institutions did participate. The third objective, to accumulate response data for subsequent studies was partially met; most of the response categories were too general to be used to create a closed-form questionnaire, but can be used to guide the construction of another survey form.

In response to bibliographic skill questions, the trend seemed to be from a limited set of specific responses students probably learned prior to college, to very generalized responses; overall students have a good general sense of information genre, without knowing a range of specific titles. This trend continued when electronic bibliographic resources were examined. Very likely the recent incorporation of computerized indexes and online database technology has contributed to the confusion of what an electronic resource is, a computer, the CD-ROM disk, or the specific program driving the information search.

Responses to mediagraphic skill questions varied greatly. The most surprising result was the response to the opaque/overhead projector distinction. The correct replies either centered on the type of materials each projector used, the lighting in the classroom when used, or the relative heat produced in operating each projector. Then when queried about filmstrips, students seemed to be aware generally of where to find information, but tended to mix media; this probably reflects the current emphasis on "high technology" in teacher education to the detriment of other media. The previous speculation on "high technology" is borne out with the results of the copyright question, since it is often related to copying computer programs and videotape when addressed in methods coursework.

The students' perception of the library and librarian seemed to be mixed, with the egocentric expectation that the library would have all the materials a teacher would ever need to teach a class; and then have a perceptive insight into the competencies a librarian should have. This dichotomy is probably due, in part, to the questions being framed in terms of library and librarian, rather than library media center and library media specialist. There may also have been confused expectations based upon students' experience in a college library, and the distant memory of earlier schooling.

In comparison with the two trends suggested by the Knapp study, today's students still seem to: 1. use a small number of references or sources of information, and 2. have a merger concept of how the library and librarian can help them in their teaching; though their concept of a "librarian" is limited, it seems perceptive.

In conclusion, this study was phase I of a three phase research project. In phase II the questionnaire will be reformatted so that subjects can check answers, it will include media items that deal with telecommunications and microcomputers,

and the sample for study will be drawn from four states. In phase III the closed-form questionnaire will be conducted nationwide.

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